

The background image shows a busy street intersection during the day. In the foreground, there are traffic lights on a horizontal pole. Below the lights, a line of cars is stopped at a red light. A white MBTA bus with the number 28 and the destination MATTAPAN is visible in the middle of the line. To the right, a yellow school bus is also stopped. In the background, there are brick buildings and a billboard that reads "There IS Evidence (83) FOR TRUTH".

Blue Hill Avenue Transportation Action Plan: Streets Cabinet Evaluation

Published October 6, 2023



Project context



- **52%** of the travelers on BHA during rush hour are riding buses!
- The **28 bus** carries more passengers than any other bus in New England!



- There is, on average, **a crash requiring EMS every three days** on Blue Hill Ave.
- The number of motor vehicle crashes per half mile is in the **top 3%** of Boston's streets.



- Mattapan and Dorchester residents have **relatively greater access to vehicles** compared to Roxbury or citywide rates.
- **45% of Grove Hall households** do not have access to a car.



- **3,056 hours**/weekday are lost collectively by bus riders on BHA due to traffic and delays.
- **64 more hours** per year are spent by Black bus riders on MBTA buses compared to their fellow White passengers.

Design approaches to address concerns

The Two Approaches



A Multimodal Corridor approach *Rebalanced street space for all ways of travel*

- Current Funding: \$48 million with federal, state, and City funding
- Street design that balances the needs of different travelers, including drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, and bus riders. It seeks to make travel safe and reliable for everyone. It also includes community spaces and tree canopy expansion, lighting improvements, and art.



"Enhanced existing" approach *Keeps existing street layout with improvements at the edges*

- Current Funding: \$18.5 million in City capital plan
- Small-scale safety improvements like better crosswalks, bringing BHA into a "state of good repair" such as repaving, sidewalk repairs, access ramps, street restriping and replanting empty tree pits. It focuses on traffic enforcement.

These approaches focus on how design can address community concerns.

While related, this is separate from policy and program changes such as increased traffic enforcement and management, financial and technical assistance to businesses, or housing stability programs for residents.

For this reason, BTD and MBTA have connected with 16 state and local agencies to ensure that street design for BHA complements future policy and program investments.

Streets Cabinet evaluation of design approaches

Shared Concerns

Multimodal Corridor

Enhanced Existing Conditions

Physical safety
is a critical issue.

- Each mode of transportation has separated lanes reinforcing safer traveling behavior
- Traffic is managed through design and relies less on enforcement
- Blue Hill Ave as a place where people want to be means more eyes on the streets, watching out for one another, and an enhanced sense of personal safety

- Travel lanes and parking lanes are similar to current conditions with limited safety benefits
- Major improvements to traffic safety will require extensive presence of law enforcement

There is a lack of
respect among
many BHA
travelers.

- Improves bus service, which means more frequent and less crowded buses, leading to fewer conflicts
- Dedicated space for different modes signals that there are different types of road users who should be watched out for and respected

- Makes some improvements to conflicts between pedestrians and cars, but does not significantly address conflicts between cars, buses, pedestrians, and bikes

Streets Cabinet evaluation of design approaches

Shared Concerns

Multimodal Corridor

Enhanced Existing Conditions

The City must protect against the potential negative impacts of infrastructure investment.

- Money and scope for transformational approach creates opportunities to work with housing, small business, and others to holistically address community concerns
- Makes non-driving, lower-cost forms of travel safer and more reliable
- More people are able to travel along the corridor at a time with better community access to jobs, resources, family, and customers for businesses

- Smaller-scale change may mean smaller-scale displacement pressures, but approach does nothing to address transportation costs or existing displacement pressures

The City should support a thriving civic and commercial corridor along BHA.

- More room for benches, trees, lighting, art, and amenities makes significant friendly places that strengthen community
- Transforms Blue Hill Ave into boulevard-like street that is part of the neighborhood, not a street designed to get people from the suburbs into and out of Boston as quickly as possible

- Continues to look and feel like highway-like in certain parts
- Some room for benches, trees, lighting and art with constant sidewalk widths

Streets Cabinet evaluation of design approaches

Project Goals

Multimodal Corridor

Enhanced Existing Conditions

1. Improve pedestrian safety along Blue Hill Avenue

- Design prioritizes pedestrian safety at its core by discouraging speeding and protecting pedestrians with better sight lines, and shorter and more frequent crossings

- Some improvements are made to existing crosswalks and some new crosswalks are added, but design has limited ability to address dangerous driving

2. Expand transportation options and reliability

- Buses will be more frequent, more reliable, and faster for the more than half of current BHA users who ride the bus
- Better bus service can entice some people to get out of their cars, leaving more space on the road for people who do need to drive

- Even with the MBTA providing more bus service, lack of a dedicated lane means buses are unlikely to be frequent, reliable, or faster
- Without mode shift, traffic will only get worse

3. Connect infrastructure investments to the work of other City departments and State agencies

- Space created for major tree canopy expansion, helping address urban heat island
- In partnership with MOH's anti-displacement work, can lower overall household costs by improving low-cost travel options like bus, bike, and walking

- Existing empty tree pits are replanted
- Does not address access to jobs for bus riders, who typically spend a majority of their income first on housing and then on transportation

Project timeline October 2023 - 2025

Oct 6th: Presented community engagement report and BTD evaluation to local elected officials

Oct 11th: Released community engagement report and BTD evaluation to the public

Post-Oct 11th: Commenced community engagement report communications plan, including: flyering along Blue Hill Ave, social media ads, radio interviews, local newspaper placements, MBTA rider-facing communications, individual outreach to important stakeholders (e.g., Morning Star Baptist Church (already in process), Franklin Park Zoo, Prince Hall Grand Lodge, etc.)

January: City hosts town hall publicizing decision on design approach

IF multimodal corridor design approach selected, then:

Spring 2024 - Fall 2025: Refine design block-by-block with the community to address parking, loading, bike lane, and travel lane tradeoffs

Winter 2025: Finalize design and put out bid for construction

Spring 2026: First phase of construction could begin, limited disruptions focused on utility work with limited impact to travel or parking

IF enhanced existing design approach selected, then:

Spring 2024: Release RFP to contract engineering company that can design small-scale improvements

Summer 2024 - Winter 2024: Refine design details with community

Spring 2025: Improvements made as construction crews and staff are available